

This Week in Congress

June 28, 2010

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." This week's headlines are:

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Working to Open New Markets for Kansas Wheat Farmers

This week, I called for passage of three pending trade agreements to open new markets for Kansas wheat farmers as harvest progresses across the state. New market access is critical for our wheat farmers who are encountering growing wheat supplies and declining prices. Unable to move wheat on the world market, grain elevators are dropping the cash price paid to local farmers. If pending trade agreements were approved, duties on U.S. wheat in these countries would immediately be eliminated, creating new opportunities for wheat exports.

The pending trade agreements include the United States-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement, the United States-Panama Trade Promotion Agreement and the United States-Korea Free Trade Agreement. I made my support clearly known during debate on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives, at a House Agriculture Subcommittee hearing and in a bipartisan letter sent to President Obama. [Click here](#) to view my comments to the House and [click here](#) to view my comments during the Subcommittee hearing.

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Amnesty Is No Solution to Immigration Problem

Media reports this week indicated that the Obama Administration may be considering granting amnesty to millions of illegal immigrants. While the federal government has clearly failed when it comes to immigration, granting amnesty to illegal immigrants is no solution. I strongly oppose any attempt to circumvent Congress and reward those who have entered our country illegally. Instead of granting amnesty, the federal government must secure the border and enforce our laws.

I am a sponsor of the leading border security bill in Congress, the Secure America through Verification and Enforcement, or SAVE, Act. This legislation will strengthen border security by hiring additional Border Patrol agents and making use of technology to monitor and protect our national boundaries. While protecting the border must be part of any legislation to stop illegal immigration, the SAVE Act goes further to deter illegal immigration by requiring all employers to verify the legal status of workers. In addition, it expands detention facilities so that when illegal immigrants are caught, they are not released back into society.

Granting amnesty to illegal immigrants is a disastrous idea that will further bankrupt our country. I will continue to monitor this situation and oppose amnesty, which undermines the rule of law.

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Supreme Court Upholds Second Amendment Rights

Today, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down Chicago's handgun ban, ruling that the Second Amendment right of individuals to keep and bear arms applies to state and local governments. Last year, I joined other Members of Congress in signing an amicus curiae, or "friend of the court," brief supporting gun rights in the McDonald v. City of Chicago case.

This ruling is a great victory for law-abiding gun owners and sends state and local governments a message that the Second Amendment freedoms of law-abiding Americans cannot be violated. Today's decision follows a ruling two years ago when the Supreme Court overturned Washington, D.C.'s gun ban and affirmed an individual's Second Amendment right. The Court has recognized what we all know to be true: that all Americans enjoy this fundamental right and are to be protected from government intrusion.

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Congress Finally Approves New Sanctions against Iran

On Thursday, I supported passage of the toughest, most comprehensive sanctions against Iran ever considered by Congress. The Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act imposes critical energy and financial sanctions that, if implemented, will pressure Iran to abandon its illegal nuclear program. Although Iran sits atop a wealth of oil and natural gas, it lacks the ability to turn much of that oil into gasoline. Importantly, the legislation sanctions foreign entities that invest in Iran's domestic refining capacity or assist Iran in importing refined petroleum. The legislation also targets those in the Iranian regime who abuse human rights and prohibits U.S. government contracts from being awarded to foreign companies that provide the Iranian government with technology that can suppress freedom of speech.

President Obama must immediately enforce these new sanctions. For too long, our efforts to stop Iran have been half-hearted and previous sanctions have not been enforced. Now, our determination to stop Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapons capability must exceed Iran's determination to get a bomb. [Click here](#) to view my comments to the House of Representatives.

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Hearing from Farmers during Agriculture Hearing on Next Farm Bill

The House Agriculture Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities and Risk Management held another hearing this week to review U.S. farm safety net programs in advance of the 2012 Farm Bill. This hearing allowed me and other members of the Subcommittee to hear from a wide range of producer groups including the American Farm Bureau Federation, National Farmers Union, National Corn Growers Association, National Barely Growers Association, American Soybean Association, U.S. Rice Producers Association, National Sorghum Producers, National Cotton Council, USA Dry Pea and Lentil Council and the National Association of Wheat Growers. As we head into the next farm bill, Congress will have to find ways to do more with less available funding. That is why it is important to start our conversations with producers now, so we can develop the most fiscally responsible and effective safety net possible.

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Working to Preserve Internet Access

In April, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia issued the Comcast Corp. v. FCC ruling, which decided the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) lacked authority to impose network neutrality restrictions on the telecommunications provider Comcast. Following the court decision, FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski announced the FCC planned to reclassify broadband as a phone service rather than its traditional classification as a telecommunications service in order to regulate service providers. At a meeting earlier this month, the FCC voted 3-2 to launch a notice of inquiry, which asks for public comments on the reclassification proposal.

I am concerned the FCC is acting without the consent of Congress to regulate the Internet. Additional regulations and restrictions would have a negative impact on Kansas providers and diminish their ability to serve Kansas communities. In May, I joined congressional leaders in urging Chairman Genachowski to halt plans to regulate the Internet and to allow Congress time to complete its work on the issue. Important decisions about the future of the Internet should be made by Congress, not the FCC. I will continue to support broadband expansion in our state and will work hard to prevent government agencies from jeopardizing Kansans' access to broadband services.

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EPA Delays Lead Paint Rule

On April 22, a new Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rule designed to protect children from unsafe lead exposure went into effect. Paid renovators who work on more than 6 square feet of the interior or 20 square feet on the exterior of a home built before 1978 must receive the "Lead Safe Work Practices" training from an EPA accredited trainer before performing renovation work or face fines up to \$37,500 per violation, per day. Kansans have expressed to me their frustration with the limited number of classes offered and the small number of qualified class instructors available in our state. Construction and renovation professionals, the majority of whom own or are employed by small businesses, are doing their best to comply with the EPA's ruling, but more time is needed.

In response, I became a sponsor of H.R. 5177, legislation that would delay the rule by one year and allow a homeowner to "opt-out" of the requirement if there is not a child under six years old or a pregnant woman residing in the home. On Friday, June 18, the EPA announced a delay in the enforcement of the rule until December 30, 2010, so long as renovators have enrolled in a class by September 30, 2010. This delay in the rule's effective date will allow Kansans more time to receive training. [Click here](#) for more information about the training classes.

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Learning about Challenges Kansas Hospitals Face

On Monday, I visited St. Marys Health Center in St. Marys and Cushing Memorial Hospital in Leavenworth. Access to quality health care is a critical issue for Kansans and I am visiting as many facilities as I can to learn about the challenges these institutions face to provide quality health care coverage to Kansans. St. Marys Health Center is a 24-hour emergency care facility that serves the community. Thanks to Michael Bomberger for his hospitality and for giving me a tour of the facility.

Cushing Memorial Hospital is a comprehensive health care facility serving Leavenworth County. Founded in 1894, the 74-bed hospital features 24-hour emergency care with complete inpatient and outpatient diagnostic testing. Thanks to Ron Baker, Susie Beying, Sally Border, Brett Matthews, Dr. Guy Williams, Dr. Anthony LaSalle, Rita Swann and Vicki Wells for spending time with me so that I can better understand the issues facing hospitals like Cushing Memorial.

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Watching Country Music's Greatest at Manhattan's Country Stampede

On Friday evening, I joined thousands of country music fans at Country Stampede, a four-day country music and camping festival held at Tuttle Creek State Park, just north of Manhattan. I grew up in Plainville listening to country artists like Waylon Jennings and George Jones, but rarely did we have the opportunity to see our favorite country artists perform live. I enjoyed spending the evening visiting with Kansans and listening to many talented performers. I even had the opportunity to greet the crowd before one of country music's biggest stars, Keith Urban, performed at his third Country Stampede.

Events like Country Stampede remind me how fortunate we are to be Americans and to live in a free country. With Washington, D.C. so out of touch with the average American, I think what Washington could use is a good country song. They could use a reminder of the values those of us here in Kansas hold dear—values like family, God and freedom. No matter how you sing it, that is what makes our country great.

Thanks to Jeff Copper of Hays for arranging the details of my visit and thanks to all the event organizers for their hard work to ensure this year's Country Stampede was a great success.

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In the Office

Terry Holdren of Topeka was in with the Kansas Farm Bureau to discuss upcoming farm bill hearings. Robert Parkerson of Overland Park was in with National Crop Insurance Service to talk about the latest draft of the Standard Reinsurance Agreement released by USDA. Nikki DePaola of Manhattan was in with the Formosa Foundation to update me on events happening in Taiwan. Joseph Conroy of Emporia was in with the Kansas Association of Nurse Anesthetists to share his support for the Rural Access to Nurse Anesthesia Act.

Matt Jaeger of Minneola, Harold Kraus of Hays, Bob Henry of Robinson, Chris Billinger of WaKeeney and Dennis Hupe of Topeka were in with the National Biodiesel Board to talk about renewal of the biodiesel tax credit and its impact on Kansas. Donn Teske of Wheaton and Jason Schmidt of Newton were in with the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition to discuss the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program and the Conservation Stewardship Program. Chuck Jarnot was in with the Herington UAS Flight Facility (HUFF) to update me on HUFF's unmanned aircraft development efforts.

Mike Hagedorn, Julie Porter and Ashley Jones-Wisner of Lawrence were in with the Greater Kansas City Local Initiatives Support Corporation to talk about the HUD Section 4 Grant Program and housing development. Dr. Janet Juhnke and Ted Hale of Salina were in with RESULTS to discuss strategies to create a tax policy that encourages work and helps the impoverished. John Federico of Topeka was in with the Kansas Cable Telecommunications Association to share his thoughts about the National Broadband Plan and the FCC's intent to regulate the Internet. Students from Frankfurt High School also stopped by to visit with me this week.

Chad Austin of Topeka was in with the Kansas Hospital Association to discuss current legislation affecting hospitals in Kansas. Ron Pasmore and Pat Terick of Wichita, Brenda Maxey of Hutchinson, Tom Laing and Jane Rhys of Topeka and Sharon Spratt of Lawrence were in with the ACCSEC to express their support for extending the expiring formula for the Federal Medical Assistance Percentages. Judi O'Grady of Eudora, Andrea Hamersky of Wichita, Rebecca George of Denison and Linda McFate of Coffeyville were in with CureSearch to discuss the need to fully fund research to help find a cure for pediatric cancer.

Jan Gerber of Wichita and Linn Shaffer of Caldwell were in with the International Association of Compounding Pharmacists to call for a hearing on the FDA and their ability to regulate pharmacy compounding of prescription medicines. Edie Snethen and Richard Morrissey of Topeka were in with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to talk about accreditation for local health agencies.

Several Kansans were in this week for a tour of the U.S. Capitol building, including Aaron, Jane, Christopher, Andrew and Katherine Dirks of Overland Park; Creta Wonderlich of Osborne; Jim and Linda Collins of Scott City; Crystal Cook and Kristy Pfannenstiel of Hays; and Steve Zamora of Leavenworth.

Contact Me

It is an honor to serve you in Washington, D.C. Please let me know how I can be of assistance. To send me an email, [click here](#) . You can also [click here](#) to contact me through one of my Kansas offices or my Washington, D.C., office.

Very truly yours,

Jerry